DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 257 071 CS 208 863

AUTHOR Last, Ellen
TITLE The Texas Textbook Protestors Define Literature and Education: An Analysis of Arguments and Approaches.
PUB DATE [82]
NOTE 29p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Content Analysis; *Literature Appreciation; *Textbook Content; *Textbook Evaluation; *Textbook Research; *Textbook Selection; Textbook Standards
IDENTIFIERS Texas; Textbook Adoption Policies; *Textbook Selectors

ABSTRACT

Because the state of Texas is the largest single market for secondary texts in the nation and because its state adoption process has drawn a small but well-organized group of protestors, the Texas textbook adoption process has begun to shape textbooks in use nationwide. A study was conducted to examine the arguments most recently used by citizens protesting selections in literature textbooks proposed for adoption by the state of Texas. The study involved several approaches: a reader-response analysis; a tally of authors and works attacked; and analysis of numbers of petitioners, numbers of written arguments, and numbers of oral arguments; and an analysis of general statements about literature, education, and culture. The analyses revealed key assumptions of the protestors. First, they define literature primarily in terms of a literal reading of its content. Literature is expected to be uplifting and optimistic, and to present traditional American values. Second, they view the schools as places where children should receive a factual, skills-based education. Third, the protestors use their knowledge of the system in a well-organized attack that has gained maximum effect from the arguments of a small number of people. As a result, textbooks are traditional, inoffensive, and bland. (Author/DF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED257071

The Texas Textbook Protestors Define Literature and Education: An Analysis of Arguments and Approaches

Ellen Last, Ph.D.

English Language Arts Consultant

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

125 South Webster Street

Box 7841

Madison, WI 53707

(608) 267-9265

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Ellen Last

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CS 208 863

The Texas Textbook Protestors Define Literature and Education:

An Analysis of Arguments and Approaches

Abstract

Because the state of Texas is the single largest market for secondary texts in the nation and because its state adoption process has drawn a small but well-organized group of inveterate protestors, the Texas textbook adoption process has begun to shape textbooks in use nationwide. Some have viewed this influence as one manifestation of a trend toward censorship of secondary-school materials. Although many books and articles have chronicled this rise, little scholarly research has been done. This study is a close examination of the arguments most recently used by citizens protesting selections in literature textbooks proposed for adoption by the state of Texas.

The study involved several approaches: a reader-response analysis; a tally of authors and works attacked; an analysis of numbers of petitioners, numbers of written arguments, and numbers of oral arguments; and an analysis of general statements about literature, education, and culture.

The analyses revealed key assumptions of the protestors. First, they define literature primarily in terms of a literal reading of its content. Literature is expected to be uplifting and optimistic and to present traditional American social, political, economic, and religious values. Second, they view the schools as places where children should receive a factual, skills-based education which supports without question the values of the home and the church. Third, the protestors use their longstanding knowledge of the system in a well-organized attack that has gained maximum effect from the arguments of a small number of people.

The Texas Textbook Protestors Define Literature and Education: An Analysis of Arguments and Approaches

Issues surrounding the selection and censorship of school materials have leapt to prominence in recent years, as evidenced by the activity of professional organizations of librarians, teachers, administrators, and school boards as they provide information and advice to their members. In the popular press, journalists of the traditional right, the left, and the center have written extensively about the topic, and the major civil-liberties organizations, augmented by a more recently-formed group called People for the American Way, have supported efforts to combat threats to freedom of thought and expression from the "new right."

Publishers, educators, and book protestors all have recognized the importance of the state textbook adoption procedure in Texas; indeed, many feel that this procedure is the source of pressures so intensely negative and authoritarian that they can only be termed censorship. As the largest single customer for secondary-level textbooks in the nation, Texas wields immense economic clout. Because its wealth and student population are sizable and because its adoption procedures have been in place for many years, Texas has become a focal point in the censorship controversy. Textbook challengers like Mel and Norma Gabler have over twenty years' experience with the Texas adoption system, and in recent years groups from around the country have called upon the Gablers' Educational Research Analysts for help in the nationwide crusade against textbooks.

Purpose

Although the censorship problem has been widely discussed in the professional literature, no study has provided a scholarly analysis of the actual testimony

of petitioners in official book-adoption procedures. This study examines the objections filed with the State of Texas the last time literature books were adopted (1978), and it attempts to provide a profile of the assumptions of the Texas textbook protestors regarding the role of public education and the place of literature within it.

Methods and Findings

Materials

The materials analyzed for the study were the Bills of Particulars and Publishers' Answers filed in preparation for the 1978 Texas state adoption proceedings and the Transcripts of Proceedings: Textbook Hearings Before the Commissioner of Education and the State Textbook Committee.

Because these materials were voluminous, I limited my study to attacks on the secondary literature and reading texts submitted for approval by the publishers ranking first and second in sales in Texas: Scott, Foresman and Company and Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc. (generally referred to in the complaints as Scott and Harcourt). I analyzed the responses to the Scott Medallion Series of updated literature anthologies (adopted) and those to the Scott Signal Series for reluctant readers (not adopted). Harcourt proposed only the Classic series of books for adoption, and they were all listed. I examined all complaints made against Harcourt.

In an attempt to gain as comprehensive a view of the arguments as possible, I designed a methodology involving several analytical approaches. The various procedures for data collection included the following:

I. A tally of numbers of petitioners and numbers of complaints.

II. A compilation of authors and works objected to.

III. A summary of petitioners' general statements about culture, education, literature, and the literary canon.

IV. A classification of arguments using a descriptive system.

In the interests of brevity, I have presented a more detailed description of each of the four analytical methods, along with major findings, in the following sections.

I. Tally of Petitioners, Bills of Particulars, and Hearing Appearances

The rules governing the textbook process in 1978 required complainants to submit written reactions to the books being considered for adoption. Since these rules allowed only negative comments, all responses were complaints. The resulting Bills of Particulars, submitted to the state's Commissioner of Education for forwarding to the State Textbook Committee well in advance of the hearings, were usually signed by more than one person. While the law allowed one person from each group filing a Bill to speak at the hearings before the Textbook Committee, a relatively small percentage of the petitioners presented their complaints orally.

The three series of textbooks drew a total of nineteen Bills of Particulars on which forty-five signatures appeared. These forty-five signatures represented various groupings of seventeen total petitioners, including three married couples. Of the seventeen signers, six appeared before the Textbook Committee to present a total of thirteen oral complaints. The most notable finding in this part of the study involved the small number of people who produced the bulk of the complaints. Of the seventeen petitioners, eight were responsible for 80% of the signatures on Bills. Of the six persons giving oral complaints at the hearings, two were responsible for 69% of the presentations to the Committee.

II. Authors and Works Objected to

One of the most striking features of the data is the large number of authors and works objected to by the petitioners. The four books of the Scott Signal Series contain 254 selections. More than 99% of these were attacked. For the standard literature anthologies, the counts of selections attacked are as follows:

Table 1
Series Attacks

Publisher/Series	Grade	Attacks
Scott Medallion	9	34
Scott Medallion	10	14
Scott Medallion	11	81
Scott Medallion	12	8
Subtotal Scott Medallion		137
Harcourt Classic	11	12
Total--All Anthologies		149

For the twelve books of the three series studied, the total number of selections attacked was 401.

The following table presents an abbreviated list of the most frequently attacked selections in the Signal Series for reluctant readers. The counts include columns for the number of signatures on the Bills attacking the selection, the number of Bills containing objections, and the number of objections in oral testimony (OT).

Table 2
Selections Most Frequently Attacked
(Books for Reluctant Readers: Scott Signal Series)

Title/Author	Signatures	Bills	OT's
"X: A Fabulous Child's Story" Lois Gould	11	4	2
"The Murder of George Washington" Richard M. Gordon	6	3	2
"On the Sidewalk Bleeding" Evan Hunter	6	3	2
"Travail for a Tory" Robert Edmond Alter	6	3	2
"Duel" Richard Matheson	6	3	1
"Reflecting on Camp Jerome" Delphine [illegible]sume	6	3	1
"A Horseman in the Sky" Ambrose Bierce	6	3	0
"Not Knowing in Antalen" Tino Villanueva	6	3	0
"That's the Way I've Always Heard It Should Be" Carly Simon	6	3	0
"Tsali of the Cherokees" Alice Marriot	6	3	0
"Alone" Nikki Giovanni	6	2	1
"Arthur" Sharon Bell Mathis	6	2	1
"At the Housefly Planet" Christian Morgenstern	6	2	1

The lists of selections frequently attacked are composed almost entirely of American authors, most of whom represent the twentieth century. The same observation, with two notable exceptions, is true of the selections most intensively attacked. For this table, I listed all selections attacked at some length, i.e., in complaints of a page or more.

An abbreviated list of the selections most frequently attacked in the standard literature anthologies follows:

Table 3
Selections Most Frequently Attacked
(Standard Anthologies: Scott and Harcourt Combined)

Title/Author	Signatures	Bills	OT's
"The Lottery" Shirley Jackson	10	4	2
"The Scarlet Ibis" James Hurst	9	3	2
"The Harry Hastings Method" Warner Law	9	3	1
"The Jilting of Granny Weatherall" Katherine Ann Porter	8	3	2
"The Housewife's Lament" Anonymous	8	3	1
"The Most Dangerous Game" Richard Connell	8	3	1
"Old Dog" William Stafford	8	3	1
"The Stone" Wilfrid Gibson	8	3	1
"A Visit of Charity" Eudora Welty	7	3	3
"The Idealist" Frank O'Connor	6	3	0
"My Planet 'tis of Thee" Isaac Asimov	6	3	0
"April 2005: Usher II" Ray Bradbury	6	2	2
"Flight" John Steinbeck	6	2	2

Table 4
Selections Most Intensively Attacked

Title/Author	Signatures	Bills	OT's	Pages
"X: A Fabulous Child's Story" Lois Gould	11	4	2	12½
"April 2005: Usher II" Ray Bradbury	6	2	2	9
"The Lottery" Shirley Jackson	10	4	2	8½
"A Visit of Charity" Eudora Welty	7	3	3	4½
"Travail for a Tory" Robert Edmond Alter	6	3	2	3 3/4
"The New Boy" roleaine Hornstein	6	2	1	2 3/4
"Black Boy" (not in any anthology) richard Wright	3	1	1	2½
"Dino" Reginald Rose	6	2	1	1½
"A Modest Proposal" Jonathan Swift	2	1	1	1
"The Somebody" Danny Santiago	6	2	1	1
"Bartleby the Scrivener" Herman Melville	4	2	1	1
"Daily but Sadly" Irene Marchenko	6	2	1	1

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Of the twelve selections attacked in complaints of a page or more, four are by women, two by minority American authors, and two by foreign authors. The objections to "X: A Fabulous Child's Story" generally expressed alarm over its theme, which was viewed as "women's lib propaganda." Bradbury's references to bookburners were thought to present the book protestors themselves in a bad light. "The Lottery" drew various complaints having to do with violence, biblical questions, and tone; as a result of the 1978 hearings, the Jackson story was removed from all secondary literature anthologies. "Travail for a Tory" was considered unpatriotic; "The New Boy," "Black Boy," "Dino," "The Somebody," and "Gaily but Sadly" presented objectionable views of the attitudes and activities of young people. The last story also drew comment as the work of one of "our avowed enemies," the Russians. A portion of the novel by Richard Wright, though not presented in any of the texts, was read into the record as an example of the allegedly vulgar and obscene work of Wright, whose anthologized story was not directly criticized. "A Modest Proposal" drew the comment that "The publishers can call it satire all they want. It's still cannibalism." The Melville story, like "A Visit of Charity," was attacked for its attitude toward Christian charity.

Numerous authors whose works are frequently anthologized appear on the lists of works attacked. These include Thoreau, Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Poe, Cather, Crane, Dickinson, Twain, Wharton, Steinbeck, Lewis, Hemingway, Anderson, Sandburg, Frost, Pound, Amy Lowell, Robert Lowell, Tenessee Williams, William Carlos Williams, Baldwin, Hughes, And Millay.

III. Petitioners' General Statements

Although many of the petitioners' objections are addressed to specific literary selections, some of them express general views about culture, education,

literature, and the literary canon. I collected and examined these objections as a means of providing an overview within which to read the more specific findings.

One issue repeatedly addressed by frequent petitioners Mr. and Mrs. Gabler and Mrs. Hutcheson is the importance of passing on the nation's "literary heritage" to the younger generation. Mrs. Gabler introduced her hundred-plus pages of objections to Scott's Signal Series with the following statement:

> When considering an adoption of textbooks, one must view the series as a whole. Certain questions must be asked--and answered. The foremost questions should be, "What is the intended and desired educational goal to be achieved?" In most cases, the answer would be "to transmit the cultural heritage of our nation to the young."
>
> In the cases of a literary heritage, this goal gains dual importance. Not only is content important, but structure comes into play. It is through the serious study of the written word, as expressed in the works of our predecessors, that students learn usage, phrasing, vocabulary and acceptable construction. To learn how to be truly great, one must study those who have, in the past, acheived greatness. It is impossible to learn this from contemporary authors.
>
> If the goal of LITERATURE I through IV is to transmit our literary heritage, the works of famous American and English authors must be included. To exclude them is to deny young Americans a knowledge of our cultural heritage.

The Signal Series was submitted by Scott in answer to a call in the state's Proclamation for a series of textbooks, each of which "shall be a departure from the regular anthology and shall be designed especially for students who have difficulty in the regular literature program. . .Selections should have literary merit and may represent several of the literary genre [sic] or follow one theme or genre if it has special appeal for students" (Proclamation, p.43). The Signal Series, which emphasized high-interest contemporary selections, was repeatedly characterized by Mrs. Gabler in terms she applied to Nova, the tenth-grade book:

> This book is not a literature book; it is simply a reading book and a bad one at that. The stories are negative, depressing, violent,

time-wasting. While the content is highly objectionable, the critical issue is that valuable American literature has been ignored. This deprives students of their cultural and literary heritage.

Mrs. Gabler here expresses the high value she places on passing on the nation's heritage.

Another view of the literary heritage emerges from the arguments of Mrs. Hutcheson. In commenting on Scott's eleventh-grade text, she provides the following guideline:

> The textbook for United States literature should accurately reflect what literature was written and was popular during each period of history of our country. This would show the thinking of a particular period or era in the growing period of America, and would truly reflect our literary heritage. Undue emphasis should not be given to works that were not popular at that time, but may have been later. A true picture of that current time. Granted an occasional essay or poem may be out of balance or sequence due to the belief of the editor or publisher. Editorial privilege, it is called. But when masses of material are not even mentioned; authors that indeed were popular and help to mold political and economic progress in this country have been totally ignored; and poets reflecting the spirit of that era have been eliminated, for the most part, then the ed torial privilege has been abused!

In developing her charge that the "selections chosen . . . are unbalanced," Mrs. Hutcheson provides a list of authors and books, popular in their own time, that have been ignored by the publishers. It includes the following works:

Ben Hur--Lew Wallace
Anne--Constance Fenimore Wolson
"The Ole Swimming Hole"--James Whitcomb Riley
The Rise of Silas Lapham--William Dean Howells
"Little Boy Blue"--Eugene Field
The Winning of the West--Theodore Roosevelt
The works of Horatio Alger
The Trail of the Lonesome Pine--John Fox, Jr.
"Trees"--Joyce Kilmer
Gone With the Wind--Margaret Mitchell
The Robe. Magnificent Obsession-Lloyd Douglass
God is My Co-Pilot--Colonel Robert L. Scott
A Guide to Confident Living--Norman Vincent Peale
Works of Phillip Freneau

In addition to these authors who have been omitted by the publishers, Mrs. Hutcheson lists and quotes from "four of the greatest poets in American

Literature," whose works constitute only seven pages in the Scott text. The authors and poems are these:

> Holmes--"Old Ironsides"
> Whittier--"Barefoot Boy," "Snowbound," "Barbara Friechie [sic]," "Laus Deo"
> Lowell--"The Present Crisis," "A Fable for Critics," "New England Two Centuries Ago"
> Longfellow-"A Psalm of Life," "Evangeline," "The Village Blacksmith," "Song of Hiawatha," "Tales of a Wayside Inn," "Paul Rever's Ride," "The Day is Done," "The Courtship of Miles Standish," "The Singers," "Hyperion"

Mrs. Hutcheson develops her popularity-based criterion by suggesting that the literature texts overemphasize the Transcendentalists. Their mouthpiece, The Dial, "never proved a popular publication," but the textbook editors favor them because of their connections with Harvard and/or with New England Unitarianism. She broadens the charges of favoritism and selectivity against the publishers by quoting a number of editorial references to "left-wing critics" and "revolutionary writers;" the implication is that the editors are promoting such ideas. Mrs. Hutcheson's list of authors whose backgrounds and ideas contribute to the "bias" of the textbook includes Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, Dorothy Parker, Ezra Pound, E.E. Cummings, Claude McKay, Robinson Jeffers, Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, Amy Lowell, Emily Dickinson, Karl Shapiro, and Edwin A. Robinson. She finishes by asking, "Is this our literary heritage?"

Concern for the "message" students will receive regarding their values recurs throughout the arguments, especially in criticism of any open discussion of values in the classroom. In her testimony before the Committee, Mrs. Earnest Barcuch expressed the following fear:

> The point is, I believe that values can be changed with peer pressure. We admit that values can be--that peer pressure has something to do with drug abuse, alcohol abuse, even the sex problem in our young people. But we refuse to admit that peer pressure can change values that are taught and learned in the home and the church. I contend that they do change. . . . This is not the area for our teachers to get into. It invades our privacy as parents, and you are taking away our responsibility to raise our children.

The Bill of Particulars filed by Mrs. Linda Miller quoted brief excerpts from various selections to support her objections to several categories of thematic and subject-matter concerns:

> 1. Disillusionment with traditional values--i.e. marriage, family, respect for parents, recognized authority figures and Christian beliefs.
>
> 2. Futility of life--i.e., no way to escape poverty, no way to improve your life through skill or hard work.
>
> 3. Disgraceful American history (and, apparently, promoting social injustices against Jews, Japanese, Indians, Blacks, etc.).
>
> Additionally, there are some instances of student privacy invasion and other instances of opinions stated as fact.

The Gablers' comment on "Minority Poem," in which the poet compares minorities in America to the peelings left out of an apple pie, is typical of several comments on the content of minority literature:

> This is not a poem. It is a statement written in the style of a poem, blank verse notwithstanding. Instead of feeling sorry for himself, better the author read and apply examples such as William Ernest Henley's "In victus [sic]." Quote: "I am the master of my fate, I am the Captain of my soul!" or Rudyeard [sic] Kipling's "If" or "I Am An American" by Elias Lieberman, or excerpts from the life of George Washington Carver who didn't sit around feeling sorry for himself--he did something! Think positive--think inspiration--think independent--think American.

Mrs. Roseberry also objected to the content of a story about a boy in the ghetto; in addition, she expresses concern over the use of dialect forms. For example, one poem contains the poet's wish that "i cud . . . write a/ poem as beautiful as u/ little 2/yr/old/brotha." The objection makes a note of "Misspelling and lack of capital letters due entirely to wishes of author," then attacks the inclusion of dialect forms as "a disservice to education."

IV. The Classification of Arguments

The word censorship elicits powerful emotional responses in Americans, whose awareness of First-Amendment issues is a powerful cultural force. For

this reason, it seemed especially important that the arguments of the petitioners be analyzed with as few preconceptions as possible. In reviewing the literature on censorship, I found that the controversy over literature textbooks revealed a clear and basic division between English educators and their critics in their assumptions about literature and about education. Consequently, I sought an analytical model that would allow me to approach the petitioners' arguments in a way that would be both exploratory and inductive. I rejected models that focused on types of "misreadings" because of the element of premature evaluation they implied. Instead, I attempted to find or to synthesize a methodology that would be descriptive rather than evaluative and one that would be neutral in terms of literary and pedagogical theory. This methodology, based on reader-response research and on rhetorical theory, yielded data that enabled me to draw inferences regarding the assumptions of the textbook challengers in a number of areas, including literature, education, and the values they wish to see reflected in our schools.

Reader Response Theory

For the purposes of this study, research and theory on student response to literature proved particularly useful. Beginning with I.A. Richards' Practical Criticism in 1929, numerous works have attempted to provide information on what happens when students read literature. The studies of James Squire (1964), James Wilson (1966), and Alan C. Purves (1968), have provided successive developments of the protocol method of studying responses. This procedure reached its fullest development in the work of Purves, whose system for analyzing statements about literature has subsequently been used in numerous studies of student responses.

Because of the inductive nature of the study, I chose to base the classification system on the Purves-Rippere model, which is both comprehensive in its scope and relatively neutral in its assumptions. In describing the features of the system, Purves emphasizes that his classes of elements "describe subject matter more than they assert, so that the reader is not seduced by the rightness or wrongness of an interpretation" (Purves and Rippere, p. 4). As Arthur Applebee has pointed out, the Purves system is an "atheoretical means of describing literary reactions by coding them statement by statement" (1978, p. 152).

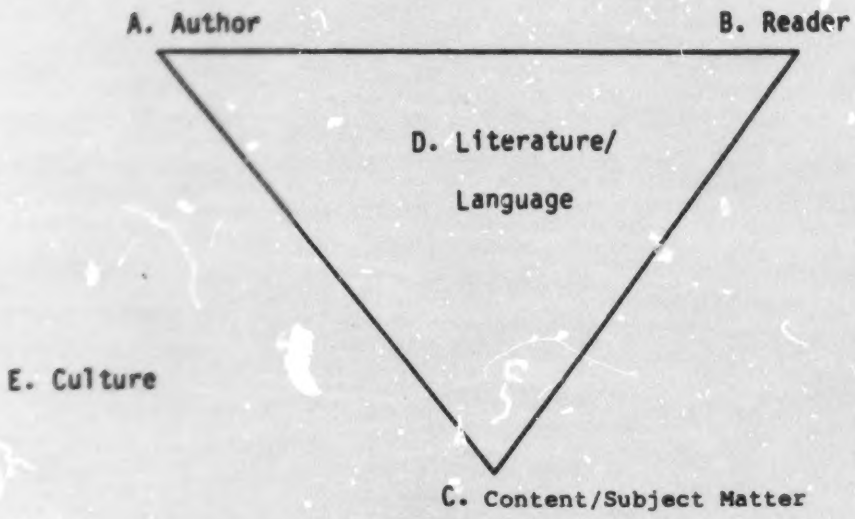
My four major categories of literary response are those of Purves and Rippere (See also Purves and Beach, 1972, and Odell and Cooper, 1976). These categories are listed below:

1. Personal statement (originally Engagement-Involvement)
2. Descriptive statement (originally Perceptive)
3. Interpretive statement
4. Evaluative statement

Rhetorical Theory

Within each category, I sought to provide a second level of subcategories. Although the Purves-Rippere subcategories provide a comprehensive analytical system for studying the comments of students, teachers, and professionals writing about literature, they were not geared to the comments of laypersons responding to literature on the basis of the ideas and world view it communicates to students. The subcategories for the analytical system needed to be descriptive, consistent, and meaningful in terms of this view of literature as communication. With these ends in mind, I chose to combine some of the Purves-Rippere subcategories with others of my own invention, classifying on the basis of rhetorical concerns. More specifically, I drew upon James L. Kinneavy's model of the general

semiotic structure, as he describes it in A Theory of Discourse (1971):



Thus, each main category was broken into four subcategories based on the parts of this communication triangle. All comments relating to the author were given the letter A, all statements in reference to the reader were assigned a B, all subject-matter or content concerns were classified C, all reference to language or literary matters were labeled D, and all culturally-based comments were designated as E's.

Each objection was then classified according to the number of its category and the letter of its subcategory. For example, a comment judged to be a Personal response (Category 1) to the Content (Subcategory C) of a story would be rated 1C. A Description of Literary features would be a 2D; an Interpretation of Author intent would be a 3A, and an Evaluation of Reader appeal would be marked 4B.

To the four-category system I added a division to include responses to educational concerns. This division, identified as Category 5, was parallel to the

literary division; again, the subcategories were organized according to the semiotic structure. A final division, numbered 6A-6F, provided for miscellaneous responses. The subcategories in this division were not organized according to the semiotic structure.

Rating

For rating purposes, the petitioners' arguments were divided into paragraphs, termed "objections," and then into "statements," similar to t-units, following the method of Purves and Rippere. Two raters (doctoral candidates in English Education/Rhetoric) then classified the objections and the statements. Inter-rater reliability on the objection level was 80.2%, with the raters agreeing on 331 of 413 items. On the statement level, the ratings matched on 1090 of 1323 for an inter-rater reliability of 82.4%.

Objection-Level Analysis

Since the findings for the objection (paragraph)-level arguments were quite similar to those for the statements (t-units), I will, in the interests of brevity, report here only the objection-level findings. The totals for the objections, expressed as percentages and listed by category and subcategory, are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Objection-Level Grand Totals

(N = 830)

	Subcategory					
	Author A (%)	Reader B (%)	Content C (%)	Lit./ Lang. D (%)	Culture E (%)	Total (%)
Category						
Personal 1.	0.8	10.1	21.7	3.0	---	35.7
Descriptive 2.	0.0	0.5	2.6	0.2	---	3.3
Interpretative 3.	2.3	0.0	3.4	0.8	---	6.5
Evaluative 4.	2.3	0.4	4.3	1.3	9.3*	17.6
Educational 5.	2.7	20.0	10.4	1.3	2.4	37.0
Total	8.1	31.0	42.4	6.9	11.7	100.0
(N = 856) **						
Miscellaneous 6.	0.0	0.6	2.5	0.0	0.0	3.0

* Subcategory 4E includes all references to literary/culturalconcerns, i.e., it is comprehensive for categories 1-4 and is parallel to subcategory 5E, educational/cultural concerns.

**N=856 for all objections including Category 6/Miscellaneous, for which there were 26 objections. Category 6 is presented and tallied separately because it is not organized according to the semiotic structure. Subcategories under Category 6 include 6A, Divergent Response (Off the topic); 6B, Rhetorical Filler, 6C, Reference to other authors/works/ 6D, Digression; and 6E, Unclassifiable.

Findings by Category

The objection-level arguments (generally, paragraph-long expressions) totaled 830. The ratings for these objections clustered heavily within two categories: Category 1, Personal Response to Literature, and Category 5, Educational Concerns, accounted for over 70% of the objections. Category 4, Evaluation of Literature, contained roughly half as many responses (or 17%) as either of the top two categories. The remaining three categories together accounted for only 12.5% of the objections.

Findings by Subcategory

The objection-level data for the subcategories are presented in the vertical columns of Table 3. As with the findings within categories, the data for the subcategories clustered in two columns. Nearly 75% of the objections fell into subcategories B (Concerns Related to the Reader) and C (Concerns Related to Content). Of these, over 42% had to do with content. Cultural concerns were a distant third with roughly 12%. Subcategory A--Concern for Author--accounted for about 8% of the paragraph-level arguments. The smallest number of responses was within Subcategory D, Concern for Literary and Language-Related Matters, with out 7%.

Category/Subcategory Findings

The cells containing the highest numbers of response were, not suprisingly, those that crossed the most frequently occurring categories with the subcategories of highest frequency.

The largest single percentage was 22% occurrence for rating 1C. The description for this subcategory employed by the raters reads as follows:

> Category 1 (General features). Personal Response: Expresses level of engagement, involvement. Differs from evaluation in that the response is immediate, personal, usually emotional. Criteria are usually not specified.

Rating 1C. Personal Reaction to Content or Theme: Spirited acceptance or rejection of the subject matter or theme dealt with in the work; reaction to the world of the work as if it were not fictional.

The personal responses to content included rejections of subject matter perceived to be depressing, violent, racist (anti-white), anti-American, anti-Christian, or anti-family. A few typical examples of this dominant category of response follow:

A statement of racial prejudice against whites.

This story...is an attack on the family, the home, American society and Christianity. It portrays the abnormal as being superior. The story content is in itself questionable, and draws several conclusions which students will accept as truth.

Students should not be required to experiment with ESP. This is superstition or spiritualism, and non-academic.

Attack on family and authority.

Poverty oriented, depressing, inappropriate content.

Leaves idea of absolutes as being unpleasant. Makes half-lies seem pretty and more desirable.

All or nearly all the objections rated 1C involved "spirited...rejection," not acceptance, of the theme or content. The fact that roughly 42% of the objections had to do with content, and that almost half of those were personal, usually emotional, reactions is one of the major findings from the data.

The other rating within Category 1 that included a fairly large number of responses was 1B, with slightly over 10%. Rating 1B was described for the raters as follows:

Category 1. Personal Response (See general features above).

Rating 1B. Reader's Assent to the Work. Moral Taste. Emotional Response. Positively, grants the work an existence separate from the reader's, a willing suspension of disbelief; negatively, exhibits a refusal to assent because of matters external to literature.

Many of the objections rated 1B were the Gablers' short, emotional rejections of the literary selections:

> Foolishness.
>
> This is ridiculous. Nonsense and a waste of time.
>
> Gutter level ideas. No literary value.

Virtually all of the objections identified as 1B were "refusals to assent" to the work.

The cell second in frequency and containing nearly as many occurrences as number-one cell 1C (with 21%) was cell 5B, with 20% of the objections. Rating 5B involves educational concerns regarding the reader and was described for the raters as follows:

> Category 5 (General features). Educational Concerns: Emphasis not on literature as literature but as a means to educational ends. Includes reactions to methodology as well as to literary selections.
>
> Subcategory 5B. Concern for literature's appeal to or effect on students as readers. Suitability for the high-school classroom or grade level.

Following are a few typical 5B objections:

> This for teaching skills? More wasting of students' time. Students are supposed to be learning literature not how to smell and feel.
>
> Deciding to kill someone for a classroom discussion is another example of the cheapness of life. This story will make students "shock proof" so that they will accept anything, like infanticide, abortion and enthanasia!
>
> This is an invasion of privacy and parents object to "value change" discussions. Most discussions usually cause a destroying of the students' values. Classroom challenge of a student's values invades the privacy of the home and individual.
>
> Listening to records in literature class is a waste of time. They should be doing something profitable.
>
> Why stress improper behavior of nation's leaders? Errodes [sic] confidence, leads to negative opinion.

Another frequently-cited rating, 5C, contained 10% of the objections. This rating represents Category 5, Educational Concerns, and Subcategory C, Concern for

Content. The guidelines used by the raters read as follows:

> Category 5. Educational Concerns (See general features above).
>
> Rating 5C. Concern with content, subject matter. Acceptability in the curriculum (This is a general judgment on whether the material belongs in the schools at all. Questions of appropriateness to grade level are included in Subcategory 5B.).

Some typical objections follow:

> Students are asked to form conclusions about a man and dog in a sequence of photographs. After the students have made several inferences about the pictures, what academic skills have been attained?
>
> What skills can be learned from what fog feels, smells and tastes like and what a shark's hide feels like?
>
> Why not stories that teach individualism and self reliance, pride of country, love of God and family?
>
> Using cartoons to teach literary skills (is an example of) Academic Unexcellence.
>
> What a subject to dwell on! Why do we need education on gangs? Open-ended questions and suggestions with no real answers. Students decide own answers. Why discuss such a negative subject when there is no solution to the problems, no encouraging content? What academic value has it?
>
> This kind of reading would serve to indoctrinate with women's lib philosophy. Not appropriate for schools .

The remaining cells contained percentages in the 0.00 to 4.3% range, with the exception of cell 4E, Evaluation based on Cultural Criteria. The total figure of 9.3% reflects frequent citation by two petitioners of sections of the Proclamation that they believe are violated by literary selections. The Proclamation, issued each year as the official call to publishers to submit books for, includes broad cultural guidelines for textbook content mandated by the Texas Legislature and applied by the Texas Education Agency, the State Board of Education, and the Commissioner of Education. The Proclamation criteria cited and the counts for each were as follows:

> 1.2 Textbook content and suggested readings which are in violation of these general content requirements and limitations shall be deleted from any adopted

textbook and teacher guide prior to purchase of the textbook by the State (2 complaints)

1.4 Textbooks shall contain no material of a partisan or sectarian character. (11 complaints)

1.5 Textbook content shall promote citizenship and understanding of the free enterprise system, emphasize patriotism and respect for recognized authority, and promote respect for human rights. Textbooks adopted shall be objective in content, impartial in interpretations, and shall not include selections or works which encourage or condone civil disorder, social strife, or disregard for the law. (26 complaints)

1.6 Violence, if it appears in textbook content, shall be treated in context of cause and consequence; it shall not appear for reasons of unwholesome excitement, sensationalism, or as an excuse for relevance. (10 complaints)

1.7 Textbooks offered for adoption shall not include blatantly offensive language or illustrations. (9 complaints)

1.8 Textbooks offered for adoption shall not present materials which would cause embarrassing situations or interference in the learning atmosphere of the classroom. (9 complaints)

1.9 Textbooks, whenever possible, shall present varying life styles, shall treat divergent groups fairly, without stereotyping, and shall reflect the positive contributions of all individuals and groups to the American way of life. Illustrations and written material will avoid bias toward any particular life style, group or individual and should present a wide range of goal choices and life styles. Particular care should be taken on the treatment of ethnic groups, roles of men and women, the dignity of workers, and respect for all productive work. (10 complaints)

While the five Category/Subcategory combinations presented above account for approximately 70% of the objections, a few of the other, less numerous ratings also provoke thought. For example, if the rating process were applied to literary comments by teachers or textbook publishers, two frequently-occurring ratings would presumably be 3D, Interpretation of Language and Literary Features, and 4D, Evaluation of language and Literary Features. In contrast, in the arguments of the petitioners, these cells contain, respectively, .8% and 1.3% of the objections.

Discussion

How do the petitioners define and evaluate literature?

Findings both from the analysis of general statements and from the ratings of objections and statements indicate that petitioners are predominantly concerned with the content of literary selections. They expect literature to be uplifting and optimistic, to express traditional views of the American family, the American economy, and the American social and political system. References to religious or ethical questions should support a literalist, orthodox Christian view. Although contemporary authors have concerned themselves with the alienation and dehumanization of modern life, these citizens have rejected such concerns as being unrelated to their own world view. In twentieth-century writers' search for meaning in existence, protestors find only a rejection of the "old-time" virtues of patriarchal white family life, youthful innocence regarding sex and death, fervent nationalism, and fundamentalist Protestant Christianity.

Attacks on the content of stories and poems imply a belief that content equals advocacy, that a story about a boy who shoplifts or a girl who runs away from home is promoting or, at least, condoning those actions. Petitioners see in textbooks a powerful vehicle for validating activities and attitudes expressed within them. This literal-minded approach to literature excludes any consideration of the attitudes and purposes of the author in presenting fictional situations or of the teacher in using these stories to promote understanding and judgment derived from these situations.

As important as content is in the petitioners' objections, they express one criterion of even greater significance--that literature exists solely as a cultural history. The Gablers' arguments repeatedly stress a view of literature as the means of passing on the cultural heritage. Mrs. Hutcheson sees it as a cultural history in which are to be found only those authors and works that have been popular in their own times and those that have not been associated with "liberal" or "left-wing" universities, organizations, or individuals. Indeed, authors should be chosen from the ranks of the "truly great" (though "greatness" and "popularity" are not reconciled

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

by petitioners), and should serve as role models for the young. However, petitioners do not advocate a simple "Great Books" approach to literary studies: they attack many major authors and classic works, among the former, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Emily Dickinson, Edgar Allen Poe, Stephen Crane, Samuel Clemens, Jonathan Swift, Thomas Hardy, and T.S. Eliot; among the latter, "A Modest Proposal," "Civil Disobedience," "Bartleby the Scrivener," Walden, The Crucible, The Glass Menagerie, "Richard Cory," Travels with Charlie, "The Death of the Hired Man," and Notes of a Native Son.

Criticism of improper language--whether vulgar, profane, or nonstandard--recurs as an important feature of the petitioners' definition of literature. They frequently attack works containing what they perceive to be "profanity," such as the phrase "Good lord!" and those using vulgar or grammatically incorrect expressions. In some cases, the expressed concern for language may mask other unstated feelings likely to draw less sympathy. Citing a concern that children be exposed only to correct usage, the protestors frequently attack works containing dialect forms, especially those by black writers.

In defining "the literary heritage," petitioners frequently recommend inspirational, patriotic, often sentimental works of the nineteenth century; Norma Gabler quotes from "Invictus"; Eleanore Hutcheson promotes the works of the "four literary giants" of America--Holmes, Whittier, Longfellow, and Lowell. The general impression the petitioners leave with their arguments on content and authors is that they would like to see a return to McGuffey-style readers, with literature used to teach reading skills while simultaneously presenting moral lessons of hard work, chastity, patriotism, and religious devotion.

In summary, the textbook critics tend to view literature as a means of passing on a cultural tradition circumscribed by white, Protestant, nineteenth-century values. They are overwhelmingly concerned with the moral influence of authors and their works, viewing both in literal-minded ways that show little sensitivity to human complexity

or to the literary uses of irony and humor. They see the literature classroom as a place for developing vaguely-defined language skills and for reinforcing home-taught and church-taught traditional values, ones that are pro-family, pro-American, and pro-Christian.

How do the petitioners view public education?

Clearly, the petitioners speak with assurance born of the belief that they represent the values of true Americanism, values that should be the expressed and taught values of the public schools. The issue of the school's role in teaching values embodies the major contradiction of the petitioners' arguments. On the one hand, they insist that the public schools should not teach values at all, but should restrict themselves to teaching factual information and skills. On the other hand, they expect to see their own values reflected in the curriculum. They generally favor a "3 R's," back-to-basics education of the sort they believed available in some earlier (and probably romanticized) period of American history. Although their complaints contain numerous errors in spelling, usage, and syntax, the petitioners obviously feel that they know what a sound education should be.

As I have indicated, the petitioners, despite advocacy of a value-free, skills-based curriculum, clearly expect certain values to be reinforced, if not directly taught, in the classrom. The frequent objections to "T-avail for a Tory" were based on revulsion for an "unpatriotic" story showing a Tory in the American Revolution as a strong and courageous man ingeniously escaping from a dehumanizing prison. A humorous story about a plot to kill George Washington by feeding him the food widely known to be poisonous--tomatoes--was criticized on similar grounds. Such arguments obviously have little to do with values to be examined in the classroom. The numerous objections to "X: A Fabulous Child's Story" clearly rested on value judgments of ideas associated with "women's lib." Norma Gabler's recommendation that students

read the life of George Washington Carver rather than the poetry of contemporary minority writers depends on a definite structure of assumptions about "appropriate" values.

Textbook publishers and teachers have long assumed that in discussing and writing about literature, students would be exploring values. Educational materials in recent years have employed an inductive approach in which the teacher, sometimes using questions and activities suggested by texts and teachers' guides, elicits from the students their interpretations and ideas on questions raised by literary selections. The petitioners view any such exploratory or open-ended inquiry as an invasion of the students' (and the parents') privacy. They believe that the values taught at home and church can easily be subverted by peer pressure in the classroom and that any instruction leading children to question or examine their values is ill-advised. Instead, when threatened by selections containing values they would not readily endorse, they retreat to insistence that schools teach factual information, for facts, like Bible-based values, are absolute. Mel Gabler once attributed the many problems of current adolescents to the New Math, which did away with absolutes.

How do the petitioners use the book-selection system of written and oral complaints to change the textbooks?

The findings suggest that a small but highly organized group of people are able to get maximum effect from the process of written and oral testimony. Bills and testimony by Mrs. Hutcheson and Mrs. Gabler accounted for roughly two-thirds of the pages analyzed, with Mrs. Hutcheson concentrating on the Scott Medallion Series and, briefly, on Harcourt's American literature text and Mrs. Gabler limiting her complaints solely to the Scott Signal Series. Mr. and Mrs. Gabler and co-signer Mrs. Robertson submitted extensive Bills on each of the Signal books, and Mrs. Gabler testified at length about each one. The Gabler/Robertson objections to the series,

carefully organized and methodically presented in the form promulgated by Educational Research Analysts, totaled approximately 150 pages.

Although it is not possible to determine precisely why the Texas Textbook Committee rejected the Signal Series, it is clear that the books were the object of an extremely well-organized and thorough assault by the Gablers, veteran textbook petitioners. Their attacks on contemporary authors and selections as having "no literary value" and as being "death-oriented," "depressing," "trivial," "inappropriate," and valueless in teaching "the literary heritage" were repeated hundreds of times; one can only wonder whether the repetition of a few well-chosen complaints would not eventually have its effect on a committee attempting to judge scores of books in a relatively short period of time.

Publishers are aware that in a given year, a dozen or more companies may be in competition to place books among the two to five listed for adoption in Texas. Many observers believe that the reality of the marketplace tempts publishers to prepare for the adoption process by eliminating materials liable to draw criticism from the most likely petitioners. In an interview at the Texas Education Agency (1980), Mr. J. Henry Perry, director of the Textbook Division, stated that, with the exception of representatives of the National Organization for Women, virtually all the citizens submitting textbook complaints have been politically conservative. Although public attention resulting in recent procedural changes may elicit more balanced responses in the future, the pressures felt by the publishers in this highly competitive, highly lucrative market remain. The like result of these pressures is textbooks that are traditional, inoffensive, and bland. In a culture in which books face ever stronger competition from television, movies, tapes, and records, media whose impact is vivid and immediate, the implications for relating literary instruction to student interest and involvement are immense.

REFERENCES

Applebee, Arthur N. "ERIC/RCS Report: The Elements of Response to a Literary Work: What We Have Learned." Research in the Teaching of English. 11(1977): 255:271.

Bills of Particulars and Publishers' Answers. Austin: Texas Education Agency, Textbook Division, 1978.

Gabler, Mel and Norma Gabler, ed. Educational Research Handbook No. 19: Textbook Ratings & Examples. Longview, Texas: Educational Research Analysts, April 1982.

-----. Educational Research Analysts Handbook No. 20: Textbook Review Criteria and Examples. Longview, Texas: Educational Research Analysts, August 1982.

-----. Educational Research Handbook No. 22: Background Information on Textbook Problems. Longview, Texas: Educational Research Analysts, January 1982.

Kinneavy, James L. A Theory of Discourse. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1971.

Odell, Lee and Charles R. Cooper. "Describing Responses to Works of Fiction." Research in the Teaching of English 10 (Winter 1976): 203-225.

Perry, J. Henry, Director, Textbook Division, Texas Education Agency. Interview with author. Austin, Texas, 14 July 1982.

Purves, Alan C. and Richard Beach. Literature and the Reader: Research in Response to Literature, Reading Interests, and the Teaching of Literature. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 1972.

----- and Victoria Rippere. Elements of Writing about a Literary Work: A Study of Response to Literature. NCTE Research Report No. 9. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 1968.

Squire, James R. The Responses of Adolescents While Reading Four Short Stories. NCTE Research Report No. 20. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 1964.

Texas Education Agency. Current-Adoption Textbooks 1979-80. Austin: Texas Education Agency Textbook Division, 1979.

"Textbooks." Texas Education Code With Table and Index, Bulletin 721. Austin: Texas Education Agency, 1971, pp. 88-109.

Transcript of Proceedings: Textbook Hearings Before the Commissioner of Education and the State Textbook Committee. Austin: Texas Education Agency, Textbook Division, 1978.

Wilson, James. Responses of College Freshmen to Three Novels. NCTE Research Report No. 7. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 1966.